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## Building a Language-Composition Curriculum in the Elementary School\*

MILDRED A. DAWSON

Supervisor Elementary Training School, University of Wyoming  
Laramie, Wyoming

### Part I: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

CURRICULUM-MAKING in our public schools is quite the fashion. However there is as yet little of standardized procedure and perhaps should not be so long as facilities for research and conditions in teaching vary so much from place to place. Because of this lack of standardization, it is necessary that the curriculum worker in each specific situation shall set forth principles to outline his procedures and policies in subsequent building up of courses. He thus will take a definite stand on such debatable questions as the degree of participation by the teaching staff, the place of the expert in curriculum-building, the core curriculum vs. individually and currently chosen activities, immediate vs. deferred values.

This is the first of a series of articles outlining practical procedure in constructing a language-composition curriculum for the fourth grade of our local training school. The various phases to be considered are (1) the guiding principles which determined the procedures in curriculum-building and the content of courses; (2) the objectively derived aims of language-composition teaching; (3) sample units as derived in the light of the aforesaid principles and objectives; and

(4) a preliminary report wherein language is taught entirely in connection with the content subjects—no separate period being provided—and wherein drill is altogether separated from expression. Acknowledgment for guidance should be given to Mr. A. K. Loomis, curriculum director in the Denver schools.

In this article the principles which may guide the curriculum-maker in the field of language-composition are divided into four sections: (1) general, which deals with the problems and issues of the curriculum in general; (2) composition, which presents principles bearing specifically on expressional situations; (3) correct usage, which gives facts to guide in the eradication of language errors; (4) methods, which indicates desirable procedures that may modify the nature of the pupils' experiences or the form of the units. There is a degree of duplication among the four sections, particularly when giving, in the latter three sections, the specific applications of the general principles contained in the first. Duplications are indicated by starring the number preceding a principle. Numerals that appear after principles refer to the bibliography, page 95, the numeral preceding a colon or standing alone being the reference number and the remaining num-

\*This is the first of a series of four articles. The remaining articles will appear in later issues.

bers indicating pages. Only mentions of principles in Burton's and Lyman's books have been pagged.

The general principles have largely been derived from the TWENTY-SIXTH YEARBOOK in answer to the general issues itemized there. The list has been supplemented by referring to the Denver study on principles. Inasmuch as the writer has stated her own position on the issues, she has attempted to validate her opinion by indicating a reference which supports her views. The specific principles have, in large part, been located and validated by an analysis of Lyman's summary of investigations and Burton's edited statements by competent authorities (who indicate a dependence on scientific studies).

#### *I. General principles in constructing a language-composition curriculum*

1. The activities of the language-composition curriculum should be selected in the light of social needs (Social needs, 7)
2. The experiences which the fourth grade language-composition curriculum shall provide should be selected in the light of the prevalent interests and activities of fourth grade pupils (Child activities, 7)
3. Insofar as possible, the activities and procedures comprising the language-composition curriculum should be selected, and degrees of emphasis should be decided, upon the basis of available experimental evidence (7)
4. The experiences comprising the language-composition curriculum should arise in lifelike situations (Favorable to transfer, 6:12)
5. "Learning takes place most effectively and economically in a situation which is vital, worthwhile" (7 corollary to 4 above)
6. The fourth grade language-composition curriculum should form an articulate part in a definite, unified, coherent program of school experiences designed

increasingly to "identify the child with the aims and activities derived from analysis of social life as a whole" (2:223)

7. The language-composition curriculum should be organized about "functional centers" of expression (4)
8. The language-composition curriculum should be organized in units, each of which should concentrate on some functional center (4)
9. "Activities and materials should be so arranged as to give the learner carefully planned assistance" (7)
10. Units of the course of study should be constructed in the light of the laws of learning: repetition, association, satisfaction (3)
  - a. Repetition should at first be frequent, later at increasing intervals; interest must be maintained
  - b. "The law of association requires proper grading of material, creating a favorable mental set toward it, connecting ideas with their appropriate objects and actions, making explanations full and concrete, having projects"
  - c. "The principle of classification by difficulty determines the moment of initial presentation, the amount of emphasis to be given specific units, and the sequence"
11. The language-composition curriculum should indicate definite standards of achievement for each year of the language-composition course (Specific goals, 6:62)
12. The standards of achievement should be in terms of skills in sentence and paragraph structure, use and growth of vocabulary, correct usage, and mechanics of speaking and writing (4)
13. Grade-placement of the standards of achievement should ultimately be based on the experimentally determined stages of child growth; tentatively,

placement may be determined by analyzing existing objectives and by specific testing of current abilities and needs (7; 6:12)

14. The language-composition curriculum should consist of suggestive type activities which have been demonstrated to contribute to the attainment of the specific goals (4)
15. The type activities should be constructed with the view of acting as guides; the teacher should then be allowed considerable latitude in modifying and supplementing these type activities so as to utilize current interests and activities and to provide for specific needs and abilities—provided that the adapted procedures will adequately accomplish the objectives of the course (4)
16. Provision should be made for continuous revision of the curriculum (7)
17. The curriculum builder in the language-composition field should take advantage of expressional situations which may arise in other subjects; he should suggest projects that will utilize these situations (Breaking down of subject matter lines, 6:12)
18. The language-composition curriculum should make definite provision for individual differences (Individual differences, 7)
  - a. Minimal essentials—different for each ability level
  - b. (If feasible) Separate course for slow sections
  - c. Supplementary experiences to stimulate most able pupils to superior work
19. The language-composition course of study should provide for a systematic testing program (7)
  - a. Standardized tests for usage
  - b. Composition scales
  - c. Informal tests constructed in light of objectives of course (minimal essentials)
- d. Stenographic reports of oral compositions

20. The language-composition course of study should provide a time-schedule to which the teacher should adhere to a reasonable degree (7)
  - a. Time spent on units
  - b. Time for giving tests
21. The language-composition course of study should indicate proper materials and procedures for practice of language-composition skills. The materials should be included in the course only in case they are not already available in suitable and convenient form
22. Curriculum makers should make some provision for individual diagnosis and an individual corrective curriculum based on language needs (6:12; 253)

## II. *Principles bearing specifically on composition*

1. The activities of the fourth-grade language-composition curriculum should promote the learning of "the ordinary, necessary acts and arts of speech, so that children may be equipped to 'take their place in the world'" (2:228)
- \*2. Each expressional situation should bear on some "functional center" (4)
- \*3. School experiences comprising the language-composition curriculum should resemble the experiences of daily life (6:11)
- \*4. Expressional situations should be selected in the light of the interests, capacities, and needs of the pupils (7)
- \*5. The language-composition curriculum must provide for pupils of the same grade or school age who may be several grades apart in language maturity and capacity (6:39)
- \*6. To provide for various ability levels, the language-composition curriculum should provide for a differentiation of activities, of minimal essentials, and of procedures (6:49)

\*Duplication of principle set forth earlier.

- \*7. Drill in language minimal essentials should be properly articulated with extended practice in expression, both oral and written (6:49)
- \*8. The course of study for fourth grade composition should set up "definite and socially defensible standards in the use of oral and written speech" (6:52, 62)
- 9. The audience values of all expression should be emphasized (6:12)
- \*10. The units involving expression-situations should be drawn from other subjects, such as literature, history, geography (6:12)
- 11. Principal emphasis should be given to the oral phases of composition (6:62)
- 12. Written composition should emphasize letter-writing (6:62)
- 13. Any grammar that may be involved in the fourth grade language-composition course of study must be strictly informal and purely functional (Pertinent skill: sentence sense) (6:52, 62)

**III. Principles bearing specifically on correct usage**

- 1. Activities in correct usage are means to ends, devices to assist the learning process; they must not be substituted for genuine social activities (2:248)
- 2. Emphasis in instruction should be placed on the immediate needs of pupils rather than upon deferred needs (6:133)
- 3. Children are naturally imitative. This fact suggests that "throughout the grades conventional usage may be taught through imitation rather than instruction." Activities should be such as to provide for opportunities to imitate good usage (2:248)
- \*4. Certain details of correct usage should be assigned to each grade for mastery (6:62)
- 5. Details of correct usage should be determined by the findings of scientific investigations (core curriculum), and

\*Duplication of principle set forth earlier.

- by a continuous survey of the local situation (7; 6:62)
- 6. Selection of the details of correct usage should be on the basis of comparative utility (6:119)
- 7. "Individualization of instruction, emphasis on pupil responsibility, co-operation of the various departments in holding pupils to good standards of usage, and, above all, more refined recognition of the nature of the objectives are important factors in establishing desirable attitudes on the part of pupils toward matters of English usage" (6:240)
- 8. "Remedial work, which follows revelations of language weaknesses must be largely, if not exclusively, individual" (6:133)
- 9. Units incorporating correct usage should utilize the laws of habit formation

**IV. Guiding principles of procedure**

- 1. Basic psychological laws and tendencies
  - a. Laws of learning (1:67 to 112)
  - b. Laws of habit formation; drill (1:343 to 368)
  - c. Tendency to imitate (2:47)
- 2. Mechanical phases of composition and matters of correct usage should be learned largely through imitation (6:232-35; 2:248)
  - a. Copywork for Manuscript form
  - b. Dictation for Punctuation
  - c. Models for Modulation of voice
  - d. Drills for Pronunciation; articulation
- 3. "The expressional personal aspects of language are matters for discussion, reasoning, taste, and judgment, rather than imitation" (2:248)
- 4. Difficulties in inducing improvement in language may be obviated by appealing to basic motives: desire for self-expression, self-revelation, communication; desire to obtain influence and

# Vitalizing Beginning English

JEAN H. DUKELOW

Supervisor of Grades Three and Four, Los Angeles Elementary Schools  
Los Angeles, California

OF ALL the subjects taught in the elementary school none is more universally and fundamentally valuable than English. It is difficult to conceive of a greater handicap than the inability to speak. The ability to communicate by means of the written word was of course a later acquisition of the human race but one that has likewise been extremely useful.

In spite of its unquestioned value it is doubtful if any subject in the elementary school is more often poorly taught, or more apt to be neglected than the subject of English. I quote one sentence from the California School Survey of which we have recently heard much: "The average school graduate has too limited use of English language, no vocabulary, and no ability to express himself."

Unfortunately it seems to be taken for granted that definite, well defined teaching techniques are superfluous and unnecessary in the teaching of English. Too infrequently perhaps, do we stop to consider just where we are going and how, and when, and why in our English instruction.

When the small child enters school he has behind him several years' experience in oral English. We hope that his habits of expression are not formed at this early age, but it is at least true that tendencies toward certain speech mannerisms may be easily distinguished. Some of these tendencies are good, others bad. One of the important tasks of English work in the lower grades, therefore, is to provide an environment in which the children may talk freely and naturally, and about things that are vitally interesting to them. This type of informal English work serves at least two valuable purposes:

1. By its means these tendencies will be revealed. (Tendencies to speak incorrectly may be corrected, while tendencies to speak correctly and beautifully may be recognized and encouraged.)
2. The speaking vocabularies of the children may be definitely enlarged and extended, and an appreciation built up for a certain skill or finesse in expressing ideas.

As children venture to use new and untried words, the teacher may build up a desirable attitude toward this achievement by letting the children know that she notices and approves of what they have done, and by the direct teaching of new words and synonyms as the children are seen to be overworking such words as *nice*, *pretty*, *awful*.

Third and fourth grade children, then, should have many and varied opportunities to express themselves in an informal way. The nature of the activities in which they engage will determine the occasions for oral English. If the content is of genuine worth to the children they will attempt to express their ideas clearly and convincingly, focusing attention upon the ideas they wish to express, rather than upon sentence structure and language form, as such. Many and varied opportunities for this type of thing are provided in such classroom activities as the giving of social studies reports, story hours and reading clubs, free dramatizations, showing visitors about the room, preparing and presenting assembly programs based upon social studies, and by planning together ways in which to proceed, and evaluating accomplishments.

The vital point is that the children have something worth while to say, accompanied by a desire to speak with accuracy and ease. This desire to speak effectively and well, comes as each child feels the responsibility to "get his message over" not to the teacher, but to his peers, the children themselves. He should therefore form the habit of speaking to them rather than to the teacher. The children who form the audience should in turn feel the responsibility of letting the speaker know if he fails to make himself understood—to question and challenge statements with which they do not agree.

Standards should be worked out, and adhered to on all occasions when children speak to the class, for example, the speaker might ask himself:

1. Did I speak distinctly and loudly enough to be heard?
2. Did I stick to the point and know when to stop?
3. Did I look at my audience—not at one person, at the floor, the ceiling, or out of the window?

Nor should the responsibility of the audience to the speaker be overlooked. The individual children comprising the audience might ask themselves:

4. Did I look at the speaker and listen attentively to what he said?
5. Did I make any helpful comments or ask any questions about things that were not clear to me?

The mere fact of the children taking part in such worthwhile activities as those just mentioned does not however insure the formation of desirable language habits and the fixation of correct usage. Knowledge of correct form is also important. This knowledge will come to the children largely through imitation. They must again and again hear the correct form in use before their ears become habituated to it. Their models will be set to a large extent by the teacher. She should therefore meticulously guard against setting before them models of incorrect, inelegant or slovenly speech.

It is inevitable that errors will occur in the oral expression of ideas. In the case of third and fourth grade children these errors are probably best corrected at the time they are made. If right relationships exist between the children and the teacher she will be able courteously to slip in the correct form for the child as he is speaking, for example, the child says "The Chinese haven't no cows." Teacher supplies "haven't any cows." He will in all probability repeat after her and go ahead with what he is saying. But this incidental teaching is not sufficient to correct errors. The teacher should record them, and set aside a definite time for the child to learn and master the correct form. The entire class may be given remedial work on errors that are common to the group—but it is more important that the individual children be helped to overcome their individual errors. One period a week is usually found to be sufficient to care for this remedial phase of oral English work. When a correct form has once been taught, the child should always thereafter be held responsible for its use. Immediate correction should be made in the cases when he forgets.

It is not generally conceded that there is an hierarchy of language difficulties, and it is not therefore necessary to follow any one sequence in working on troublesome forms. These things are best learned in relation to use. This fact should be borne in mind on occasions when use is made of the text book.

Now to sum up briefly what has been said: The desire to speak well, to convey a message to an audience, the teacher setting good speech models for the children to imitate, some knowledge of correct form—these seem to be vital in molding good habits in oral English. I have started out with a discussion of oral English for two reasons: first, it is a simpler type of thing than written English and should therefore precede it; and second, more time should be devoted to oral than to written English in grades III and IV.

I shall proceed now with a discussion of written English in the same grades.

It has been pointed out that children enter school with considerable experience in oral English and with habits of speech more or less fixed. But in the case of written English, quite the opposite is true. The children come to third grade with very few experiences in expressing their ideas in writing, and it is quite desirable that such should be the case. So many different skills are involved in written English as to make it a complicated procedure. Letter formation, punctuation, even of the simplest type, correct spelling—these and many other things must be considered as elements of written English work. Because written English, in its first stages at least, is difficult and complicated, particular care should be taken in its teaching in order that the experience may give pleasure and satisfaction to the children, for we must remember that experiences that are pleasurable and satisfying are most apt to be repeated, while those that are annoying tend to be avoided. It is tragic that some children, even as young as seven or eight, have formed a dislike for writing. Not only is it a tragedy but it is, moreover, an indictment of the methods of teaching that have been used. Children are often given written English to do as a type of filler in or seat work. They are told to write three, four, or five sentences about a certain thing—to write sentences using certain words, or perhaps several questions are written on the board and the children are told to write out answers to the questions, answering in complete sentences or worse still, the children may be given a picture and told to write a story about it. All these exercises are poor, and if engaged in will inevitably lead to a dislike for writing.

Third grade children should *never*, and fourth grade children rarely be assigned written English when it cannot be done under the careful and kindly direction of the teacher. Children should not be asked or required to do independent written English work until they have had many experiences in group composition. After having an interesting experience or one worthy of being recorded

the children dictate and the teacher writes down what they say. As the teacher writes, she definitely purposes to teach the children certain things which they will need to know before engaging in independent writing, and things which they will learn best by imitation. As she writes she makes such comments as "I mustn't forget the period," "Now I must start the sentence with a capital," "I must put the title in the center of the space," "I mustn't forget to indent," "Let's read it over before leaving it to see if it is as good as we can make it."

Stories composed in this way should be typed, and either given to each child to be placed in individual books, or if this is not feasible, at least one copy should be made and placed in a class book. The children may sometimes be allowed to copy the group composition if it is not too long.

As the children gain increasing skill in this type of group composition, they will be ready for some simple experiences in independent writing. One of the best types of independent writing, and one for which the children will see the justification, is the writing of letters to absent classmates, or letters to thank someone for a favor. If such letters are written they should be sent. Before the children start writing, a few preliminary steps should be taken.

1. A short discussion should be held in which the children suggest various things that would be of interest to the recipient of the letter. Each child should decide upon one thing that he wishes to write about and should write all that he can about that subject before he selects a second.

2. The simplest possible model for letter writing, showing placement of salutation, body of letter, and closing should be placed on the board—preferably by the children under the guidance of the teacher.

3. The children should place their spellers on their desks, having them open at the alphabetized lists so that they can look up the spelling of words that they do not know.

4. The children place their papers proper-

ly and assume a comfortable position.

5. A time limit (not too short) should be set and adhered to and the children start writing.

6. As the children write, the teacher moves quietly about the room, helping them to find words in their spellers, helping with letter formation and if necessary with the form of the letter. If the words the children ask for are not in the alphabetized lists in their spellers they should be written on the board. The children should be encouraged to ask for the spelling of all words of which they are not certain, and should never be penalized for doing so.

7. No child should feel that his letter is finished until he has read it over carefully to see that he has said what he intended to say, and to see that he has put periods and capital letters in the proper places. Nor should the letter be considered finished until the teacher herself has read it and found it entirely correct. Rarely should it be necessary for these letters to be copied over if the teacher moves about and make corrections as the children work.

8. When the letters are finished they should be properly folded, placed in envelopes, addressed and delivered.

Epidemics of note writing sometimes break out in third grade rooms, as the children gain increasing ability in writing and spelling. This should be recognized as merely a desire for self expression, which can be turned into profitable channels if the children are permitted to have a mail box in their room and are given a definite time once or twice a week in which to write, not notes, but real letters to each other. As the letters are distributed, children who find the ones that they have received particularly interesting may read them aloud to the class. In this way standards will be established in respect to content. Other children who find their letters particularly neat and well written may show them and thus will standards in respect to form be set.

Other types of written English that are

legitimate and desirable for young children are:

1. Writing of short paragraphs to explain classroom exhibits.

2. Writing of brief summarizing paragraphs, that give the most interesting facts about the different subjects discussed in social studies. These should be written for some definite purpose, however, either to put into a book, a school newspaper or to be used as part of an assembly program.

If several members of a class are writing on one subject, for example, Japanese homes, the best parts may be selected from several of the papers. A sentence may be cut from one, an entire paragraph from another. These choice bits may be reassembled, pinned on to a sheet of paper in the proper sequence and a composite paragraph, far better than any child could have made by himself, will result.

If the children are not assigned writing as a task—if all their early writing experiences are kept on a pleasurable level, and if they are not required to do *too much* writing—some of the children, often many, will gradually begin to do that thing which brings joy to the heart of every teacher, namely, creative imaginative writing. True creative writing is a symptom of a very desirable classroom environment. It is most apt to come when the classroom provides the children with wholesome, worthwhile experiences, and when the teacher is sympathetic and understanding—when she herself values the children's efforts at self expression, and when opportunities are given not only to write, but what is more important, to read their creations whether stories, poems, or plays to an audience that understands.

To summarize what has been said of written English in grades III and IV.

1. Written English is not an appropriate type of seat work.
2. It should generally *if not always* be done under the guidance of the teacher and at a time when she is free to help the children.

# A Drive on English in a Rural Supervisory District

IDA O'BRIEN

Southern Oregon Normal School  
Ashland, Oregon

ONE of the objectives for the year 1927-1928 in a rural supervisory district in Connecticut was a drive for the improvement of English among the pupils of the various schools. The schools under primary supervision included the first four grades in most of the graded and semi-graded situations, and several one-room rural schools.

The following outline was given each teacher at the beginning of the school year:

## *Language Objectives for the Year 1927-1928*

A drive on the study of language with child activity as a point of departure.

- I. In carrying out this objective, it is our aim to work along the following lines:
  - A. To arrange the setting and provide the equipment that will lead naturally and unobtrusively to the release of the child from the undesirable restraint of the traditional school.
  - B. To provide experiences that will give the child something to say and the occasion for saying it.
  - C. To stimulate the child to make suggestions and to act upon them in carrying out activities suited to his interests and needs.
  - D. To utilize the subject matter and activities in all school subjects as a means for the exercise of language abilities.
  - E. To provide that the language text be used as a reference book only.
- II. The following are examples of nuclei from which we desire to stimulate chil-

dren in the development of an activity program:

- A. First Grade Playhouse
- B. Second Grade Community Life
- C. Third Grade Pioneer Life
- D. Fourth Grade Transportation
- E. Fifth Grade School Club
- F. Sixth Grade Magazine or News-paper

III. In the development of these objectives, it is our aim to emphasize the following phases of language:

- A. The development of the sentence sense.
- B. The acquisition of a good vocabulary.
- C. The elimination of the grosser common errors.
- D. The setting up of definite standards of accomplishment in oral and written work.

## *Procedure*

At the monthly teachers' meetings, this objective, with its aims, was discussed by the teachers and the supervisors. Occasionally a demonstration lesson took the place of the discussions at these meetings. During her regular visits and during conferences in small informal groups, or with but one teacher, the supervisor sought to discover the lines along which each teacher could work most effectively. She tried, too, to make each visit a stimulation of the activity program and its accompanying language opportunities.

Standard language tests given in October revealed the children's needs in the matter of elimination of common errors. The errors heard most frequently in the schoolrooms

were listed, and the pupils made conscious attempts to eradicate them.

During the fall it became apparent that a number of teachers found it very difficult to break away from the formal procedure in teaching language. In a number of schools oral composition was limited to the reproduction of stories read by the teacher to the class. If time permitted, each pupil reproduced the story. There was rarely time, however, for all pupils to participate, and too frequently only the more gifted children were called upon to tell the story. The slow, halting speakers did not get the practice they needed. In cases where teachers conscientiously made time for these slow pupils, the class was subjected to boredom while the tale dragged wearily on. The "and," "and then," and "and so" habits were painfully in evidence, though criticism of their use was continually made by the pupils.

A word concerning pupil criticism may not be amiss here. In our efforts to escape teacher domination, we have tried to make extensive use of pupil criticism. Our intentions have been excellent, but an examination of the procedure in many schools is not reassuring. The writer was once a visitor at a teachers' meeting at which a demonstration in teaching a language lesson was the chief feature of the program. The procedure was as follows: The teacher read a story of several pages to a class of eight or ten boys and girls in third grade. Each pupil then reproduced the story, the other members of the class criticising the reproduction.

"George, I liked the way you told your story very much."

"George, I believe you said 'went' instead of 'gone'."

"George, I liked the way you stood while you told the story."

"George, you used too many 'ands'." Such were the best of the criticisms made, and there was no time for the person criticised to do anything about the matter but to say "Thank you" to his critics. The interest inevitably waned as the story became stale

and as the less gifted children recited it. Finally, a very small boy with a very high I. Q. arose, when called upon for criticism, and made a few remarks to the effect that the story was not at all well told. His manner indicated that he was extremely bored. He was promptly squelched by the teacher, who reminded him that he might receive the same kind of criticism some day. Much of the criticism made by children is perfunctory and sometimes entirely meaningless. A little girl said of the reading of each one of her classmates;

"John, you read very smoothly."

"Mary, you read very smoothly."

"Grace, you read very smoothly."

The reading in question indicated that she had no inkling of what "very smoothly" meant. In numbers of class rooms the critical comments are almost, if not altogether, pointless, and the use of the child's name to whom the criticism is addressed prefacing each remark, and the sugary tone used in the effort to be "nice" produce a priggish affectation hard for any one who wishes the Mother Tongue used honestly and effectively to endure.

Probably the most natural and sincere criticism arises from the example set by the teacher. Such remarks as;

"Did you notice that Henry used an unusual word in making his report. I think 'determined' was a good word to use in that place."

"Who can think of a better word than 'nice' for Susie to use in describing her trip?"

"Jack would like for you to listen to the story he is to tell in our program on Friday. What points would you like us to help you with, Jack?"

"Very well, boys and girls, (summarizing after class discussion in helping Jack make his points) let us remember that Jack would like us to tell him whether we can hear every word he says, whether he leaves out anything needed to make the story clear, and whether he makes any of the errors we are trying to drive out."

If children are encouraged by such examples, and if free discussion is guided and stimulated, there will soon appear a helpfully critical attitude, honest in its purpose, and free from undue severity.

During further observations in the fall term, the supervisor found that in a number of schools, much time was spent on the mechanics of written work. Lessons about punctuation, capitalization, and the parts of letters were taught in the language period instead of the writing of many actual letters. Language was felt to be a school subject to be kept in its own compartment.

At the beginning of the winter term, therefore, the teachers' meetings were devoted to a discussion of the needs of the children and means of meeting these needs. The value of the short oral composition as a means of teaching recognition of the sentence, organizing connected thoughts into brief paragraphs, and eliminating errors was discussed. The uselessness of criticism on the use of "and," "so" and other overworked words without definite suggestions as to how to overcome these difficulties was pointed out.

It was decided that the language phase of all subjects should be emphasized, and that free oral discussion in connection with all the activities be stimulated. The language periods, however, were to be devoted to definite, constructive teaching of the brief oral composition. In order to emphasize brevity, these compositions were called three-sentence stories. The subject matter of these stories was to be such as a child might naturally use in giving an account to his mother of something that happened at school, or to his teacher of something that happened at home. The week-end holiday experiences, games on the playground, neighborhood activities, current events, and topics of a similar nature were suggested by the teachers as suitable materials.

Selections from Mahoney's *STANDARDS OF ENGLISH* were read to the teachers, and good examples of brief oral compositions were collected from a number of schools by the

supervisor and sent to the teachers.

Several excerpts from bulletins sent out by the supervisor appear below.

"The brief oral composition has the following points to commend it:

1. It teaches sentence recognition.
2. It is brief enough to give time for all members of the class to participate.
3. It is brief enough that it may be written on the blackboard for class corrections and suggestions.
4. It makes organization of thought necessary, as only the high-spots in an experience can be told.
5. It teaches pupils to avoid giving unessential details, and incoherent, rambling accounts of experiences or events.
6. It enables pupils to see how words may be used most effectively.
7. It is a preparation for advanced work, as a series of these brief paragraphs may be used in developing longer stories.

"Topics chosen for the brief oral composition should be from the child's own experience or from subject matter in which he is vitally interested. The following are suggestive of topics which are suitable and available.

1. Personal experiences. (The best type.)
2. Nature study summaries
3. Social study activities
4. Descriptions
5. Criticism of work
6. Current event items

"The children should be given a number of examples of interesting beginnings for models:

1. Once when mother was away
2. When Grandma comes to our house
3. My favorite spot
4. Yesterday in our art period, we made
5. When I was four years old

"The children should be given a number of sentence beginnings that show sequence, as:

1. After we had
2. Next

3. Soon
4. As we crossed the road
5. We had just crossed the brook when
6. Finally
7. Afterward
8. After a little while

"The children should be taught to use words that vividly portray action, and that make vivid pictures of objects and settings, as:

1. We went along until we came to a row of trees. (Lacking in detail.)  
We plodded along through the mud until we came to a row of budding willow trees.
2. We went and hid. When Jim came past we scared him.  
He said so. (Lacking in vividness.)  
We crept around the house and crouched under the rose bushes by the gate. When Jim came past, out we popped, yelling like wild men. Jim admitted that he was scared."

Written work, with the exception of letter writing, was not much emphasized during the year. In the first and second grades, little writing was done. The teachers recorded the children's oral compositions from time to time, in order to keep a record of progress. When the first and second grade pupils wrote letters, the teacher gave her time to supervision, helping with the writing and spelling. The writing of real letters was stressed in all the grades.

The following criticism and suggestions for the improvement of form in written work was sent, during the winter term, to teachers having middle and upper grade pupils.

"A number of recitation periods may well be devoted to discussion of the appearance of written work. The placing of compositions of various kinds on the page is a point on which many of our pupils need help. The work is frequently placed too high to look well, and the margins are crowded and untidy. No margin line should be drawn, but pupils should learn to place work properly by discussing and

criticising their own work. There are also evidences of hurry and carelessness in putting work into booklet form. Lessons on the writing of titles for illustrations and booklet covers are needed."

Examples of good work and poor work in respect to the points discussed above were collected and exhibited at teachers' meetings. Examples of letters were also shown.

### *Results*

During the year a number of interesting units of work developed in the various schools. Invariably, because of the year's objectives, the language phase of the activities was emphasized. The following excerpt from the supervisor's annual report illustrates this emphasis.

"Mrs. Richards finally reached the goal in her attempt to utilize the children's interests and activities in instruction. The largest project undertaken was the construction of a life-size playhouse and its furniture. The method of procedure was as follows. The pupils, after the project was initiated through class discussion, met for further discussion of how to proceed with a particular phase of the work. This decided, they stated the results of their discussion, and sometimes recorded the summary in writing. In succeeding discussions, the work was allotted to committees. Plans were drawn and designs submitted and agreed upon before the actual work was begun. As each task was completed, a record was made and placed in the book that forms the history of their building. Photographs were also made and placed in this record. The immediate object of the unit was to give the children motivation for free discussion and expression in oral English. The desire to keep a record carried the work over into written composition. Designs for decorating the pages of the book and lettering for its cover were other activities connected with keeping the record."

Several newspapers became the center of English activities in the schools publishing

them. In these schools there was fine motivation for doing good work. In one school the children summarized the results of a nature study unit in an original play which they presented at teachers' meeting. Some of the best work was never written. The supervisor listened to a number of interesting oral reports given by the pupils of a rural school on the industries of the New England town in which they lived. These reports were a part of a unit of work in the social studies. They were interesting in content and very well organized. The vocabulary used was remarkable for its unusual suitability.

The amount of free discussion was noticeably increased in most of the schools. Letters improved greatly in content, sentence structure, and in form. In most of the schools, the children were able, by the end of the year, to organize a paragraph of a few well-constructed sentences, interesting in content and free from the more common grammatical errors.

Below we are giving a number of compositions illustrative of the work collected during the year. In some of these stories the efforts toward vocabulary increase are amusingly apparent.

### *First Grade*

This morning when I came to school, I saw a woodpecker. He was black and white. He had a red spot on his head.

Saturday morning I went to my grandmother's. I saw a new batch of puppies. I saw a horse called "Streak of Lightng."

One day last summer, I went up on the mountain with my father. On the way back, I saw a little fox. My father did not see him.

We are making a farm on the sandtable. We have made a house, barn, cows, horses, trees, and ducks. We are going to have real grass there.

We went over Bear Mountain Bridge yesterday. My father had to pay one dollar. We went across some water in a boat. While our car was on the boat, I found ten cents.

### *Second Grade*

Last night when I went home from school, I saw six deer. They jumped over the stone wall and stopped to look at me. When I made a noise with my dinner box, they ran away.

Last Saturday I went to my aunt's house in New Hartford. She gave me a real, little lantern. When it was dark, I put some kerosene in it and lighted it.

We have some beans in our school. They are planted in a box. There is a string tied to the window. The beans are climbing up it. There are eight pods on the vine. One is five inches long.

Last night when I went home from school, my mother was knitting me a sweater. The kitten was under the chair watching her. When my mother put the needles on the chair, the kitten took them and rolled the yarn around my feet. My mother was angry, because she had to knit some of it over again.

### *Third Grade*

#### *Our Salamander*

Our salamander is black, with yellow spots, and is seven inches long. He has four feet with four toes on the front ones and five on the hind ones. He is shaped like a lizard and his eyes bulge out like a frog's.

#### *A Trip To The Brook*

Three days ago nearly all our class went to the brook to catch some skippers for the salamander to eat. We caught twelve skippers, and some of the goldfish ate a few. The salamander did not eat any skippers.

#### *Our Frogs*

A boy in the fourth grade gave us four frogs. One got away and we do not know where he has gone. They are in the aquarium with a board for them to sit on. We have a screen over the top to keep them from hopping out.

# An Investigation of a Minor Language Skill

BLANCHE JENNINGS THOMPSON  
City Normal School, Rochester, N. Y.

IT IS rather surprising to discover how little attention has been paid by educators to the minor language skill of copying, considering the large use made of it both in school and in adult life. The writer has just finished examining fifty books in only eight of which copying was accorded any attention at all further than the suggestion that the children be required to copy some sentences, poems and the like; and of the eight, only five made even the most elementary analysis of the exercise.

John J. Mahoney, in *STANDARDS OF ENGLISH*, endorses the exercise and suggests that children be taught right methods of copying, i. e., whole words first, then phrases, then sentences. He adds that children should be rapid and accurate copyists by grade four and should be tested three or four times a year thereafter. He also states that children should copy from textbooks and not from the blackboard.

E. A. Cross in *FUNDAMENTALS IN ENGLISH* mentions the high percentage of failures in copying high school assignments. He raises the question of difference in accuracy in copying an unfamiliar piece of material as compared with something dictated first. He offers no analysis nor solution.

Laura Gillmore Sloman in *SOME PRIMARY METHODS* notes some points of difficulty in copying and suggests that each child have a separate copy from which to work.

Carpenter, Baker and Scott in *TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS* speak of "transcription" as an easy exercise and advocate its daily use.

Annie E. Moore in *THE PRIMARY SCHOOL* says that punctuation and similar skills can-

not be taught through copying unless the learner definitely purposes to learn. She remarks that copying should be meaningful and for a definite purpose.

C. C. Schmidt in *TEACHING AND LEARNING THE COMMON BRANCHES* suggests daily exercises in the earlier years in copying, chiefly from books, with perfect accuracy as to spelling, capitalization and punctuation.

That is literally all, and the fifty books examined included books on psychology, general teaching technique, and books especially intended for the teaching of language. Much copying from reference material is necessary in schools where the curriculum is organized around units of instruction, and as will be pointed out. It is a skill needed in many everyday situations. However, it is not the easy fluent exercise that it is generally supposed to be; a little analysis of the subject may, therefore, be illuminating.

First, let us consider what needs for copying may arise either in adult life or a child's world. The following is a suggestive but not at all an exhaustive list:

1. Laundry lists
2. Recipes
3. Sales slips
4. Telephone numbers
5. Addresses
6. Library call slips
7. Items from newspapers
8. Prescriptions
9. Score cards for games
10. Minutes of meetings
11. Contracts
12. Directions
13. Income Tax Returns
14. Excerpts from books
15. Poems

16. Papers and speeches
17. Diagrams
18. Lines for a play
19. Drawings, paintings, etc.
20. Music

A vocational analysis of persons who have to practice copying of some kind to a greater or less degree in the pursuit of their jobs shows that the list would include students, teachers, office clerks, mail clerks, sales people, stenographers, secretaries, ministers, lawyers, doctors, housewives, grocers, druggists, chemists, librarians, nurses and many others.

Next let us make a little analysis of how many kinds of copying there are, each differing slightly from all the others in prerequisite recognition and interpretation of symbols and techniques required.

1. Letters
2. Words
3. Phrases
4. Sentences
5. One or more paragraphs
6. Single figures
7. Numbers
8. Script
9. Print
10. Symbols (example, Chinese)
11. A foreign alphabet (example, Greek, Hebrew)
12. Typewriting
13. Formulae (scientific)
14. Outlines
15. Copying one's own writing
16. Copying another person's writing
17. Copying consecutively
18. Copying selectively
19. From blackboard to desk
20. From book to desk
21. From hectographed sheet
22. From book to blackboard
23. On board from copy on board
24. From script to script
25. From print to script
26. From script to manuscript
27. From print to manuscript
28. From script to typewriter
29. From print to typewriter

30. From shorthand to typewriter
31. From shorthand to longhand
32. With a carbon
33. Prose
34. Poetry
35. Art forms
36. Music
37. From a list
38. From a vertical file
39. Statistics
40. Copying and translating
41. Maps and diagrams

It will be noted that these forms of copying range from a very simple process to a highly involved process; that they could be arranged into groups showing marked similarity of technique; that some are used much more frequently than others and should receive more attention; and that all require a kind of skill for which children should be given a definite technique.

Consider, for a moment, a typical "copying situation" in school. The class has composed cooperatively a letter which is to be sent to some person or firm. The teacher, or possibly a pupil, has acted as secretary and has written the composition on the board. The class is now about to copy the material from the board. The blackboard space bears very little relation as a rule in shape or size to the paper used for writing. Children, especially in the lower grades, differ very much in the number of words or letters which they commonly write to a line. This factor is usually dependent upon slant, arm or finger movement. Some children have been known to stretch a single word across one line. When they attempt to transcribe the copy on the board to their papers, unless they have been told to block it out mentally first, trouble may occur in the very first line. If there are five words on the board and the child succeeds in getting only four on his line, from that point, the number of fixations increases materially, periods of confusion analogous to those in reading occur, and words or letters, punctuation marks or whole lines may be omitted. The result is an inaccurate copy and

frequently an accusation of carelessness and inattention against the child.

When the child copies from a book, the process becomes one of translation from one medium to another, from print to script, not quite so simple as it looks, for a small child. In either case the child must recognize, visualize, or memorize and reproduce whatever is for him a span of recognition. Comprehension, while not absolutely necessary to the process, helps in lengthening the recognition and memory span. Some children reproduce a visual memory, others recognize, recall and dictate to themselves.

It would seem that all copying exercises ought to be done, at first at least, for each new type under rather carefully controlled conditions. The blackboard copy should be carefully written, well spaced and visible from all parts of the room, and the children should be given a technique for reproducing. They should be taught how to visualize the whole first, then the separate lines, noting first and last words, margins, indentation, and should be trained to take in and reproduce increasingly large units, much as they do in dictation. Similar instruction should be given for other types of copying as need arises, confining the exercises in the lower grades to rather short selections. Any alert teacher, if she makes a little analysis of the matter, can foresee many of the probable difficulties and prevent them.

#### *Addenda*

After the above article was written, the writer made some experiments with third grade children, and with fifth grade children.

In the third grades, two groups were used, as nearly of one calibre as possible, and numerically even. Three types of copying were used; script to script, print to script, and print to print (manuscript writing)—all from the blackboard to the desk. One group was told to copy the indicated material but no directions were given. The control group copied the same material after the teacher had called attention to spelling, form, and punctuation, noting especially the points most frequently missed by children.

The results were very illuminating. In every case the directed group made fewer mistakes than the undirected group. The same group made fewer mistakes in a directed lesson than in an undirected lesson. Both groups made fewer mistakes in copying from print to print, which is reasonable inasmuch as they were spared the necessity of translating print into script and making the connecting strokes necessary in cursive writing. The time needed for copying was shorter for the directed than for the undirected lesson. In the fifth grade two approximately even groups were used, copying from book to paper. A typical result was a drop from 110 mistakes in an undirected lesson to 38 in a directed lesson.

These experiments, together with others made by the writer but not described in this article, indicate that there is need for much practice in copying in the elementary school; that time is saved and accuracy furthered by giving the pupils a workable technique and that accuracy is further secured by the use of manuscript writing.

# Individualization of Grammar in the Intermediate Grades

JANET L. RIEMAN

Pingree School, Detroit, Michigan

THE teaching of grammar in the intermediate grades presents two major problems. One is what to teach and the other how to teach it. Several surveys have been made and numbers of books written on the subject of what to teach and the conclusion generally reached is that what is taught must have a value for the pupil, one that he can realize and one that will help to make him a better member of society both now and in the future. If this is true, then anything that will contribute to his being a better speaker or writer will be of value.

The question of how to teach confronts educators on every hand; it is an eternal question, for with a changing society, methods have to be changed in education as well as in other fields. In view of the progress which is being made in the recognition of the value of the individual and the increasing respect for personality, one method which has swept the country is that of individualization. The ideal in education would be some system whereby the child could search for knowledge at his own rate and not be bound to keep up with a certain group. Because of the increasing demands being placed on our schools, a new plan for pupil-teacher contact must be made. Many methods have been advanced but they all have one thing in common—the lesson sheet. The differences lie in the method of procedure. A satisfactory way of using the lesson sheet is to have it include the stimulation which a teacher would use in presenting the lesson to the class as a whole under the old regime, the instructions for doing the assignment, and the assignment itself. The pupil is confronted with a life situation which must be faced, he may or may not have had experience with it. This situation raises

certain problems which are to be met and solved just as he has to meet situations outside of school. It is a definite challenge to him. When he has mastered one problem, he has another which is the outgrowth of the one he has just solved. In this way, the work proceeds from lesson to lesson. The pupil may work at his own rate with the teacher as a guide in the search for knowledge, not a school-master who rules over him.

So many general types of the individualized material have appeared in recent years all over this country that one must decide what plan will best be adapted to the particular work under consideration. One plan which adapts itself very readily to the field of grammar is the unit plan. In this scheme the work is divided into large topics and then into smaller ones. The sub-topics usually make up one lesson which may be covered in one class period or which may be carried over into several, depending on the material. The first step of each unit is an exploratory test to determine what the individual pupil's needs may be. From this test the pupil finds what his difficulties are and he is given the opportunity to work on material which will help him overcome them. If the pupil is given the opportunity to diagnose his own difficulties, he is more likely to take an interest in his work than if his work is thrust upon him and he is forced to do it without knowing the reasons. In the work sheets the divisions are matched with the divisions on the exploratory test so that if the child has one part correct on the test he will not have to spend time on that division of the work sheet, but will have time for extra creative activities which he may wish to do. The lesson sheets include the stimulation, an ex-

planation of what is to be done, and practice exercises. The keys for the exercises are found at the end of all the lesson sheets and a child corrects his own work. The teacher corrects the tests only. During the time the child is working on the lesson sheet there should be conferences with the teacher and if the pupil asks for no help, the teacher should make it her business to see that the pupil is not doing the work carelessly but actually learning something during the time he is studying. She should see that he is actually mastering what is before him. There should be constant references to the fact that if the pupil does not understand the work, he should ask for assistance which may be given by the teacher or some pupil who has already covered that particular work.

When a group of children have finished, they should be called together to talk over the unit and to exchange ideas on the subject and so benefit by what others have learned. In this way, too, there is the opportunity for individuals to realize their membership in a social group.

Following the discussion period, there is what is termed an achievement test to show the child whether or not he has mastered what he did not know on the exploratory test. It also shows the teacher whether or not he has mastered the unit. In this way it serves a double purpose.

Each child in the room is allowed to finish the unit in his own time but the whole class ought to have some kind of schedule. Each unit should be allotted a certain number of periods and for the children who finish early there should be special creative activities provided. Some of the activities might be library reading, creative forms of expression, either prose or poetry, or the preparation of some special activity which may benefit the whole group.

When a teacher begins to think of individualizing the grammar work, several problems arise. It is hard to find material suitable in the field which will serve the needs of a

group. Often she must write her own units. After they are written there is the problem of getting the material in shape for the children. Despite these minor problems, this method solves a number of class room difficulties, particularly that of getting the boys and girls to want to do the work. One boy said to his teacher, "This work actually makes you want to do it," and when there is this urge on the part of the pupil, an important step in the teaching of grammar in the intermediate grades has been accomplished.

From the study of one particular unit or of several such units the pupil ought to acquire not only a mastery of the mechanics of writing for his particular grade but the ability to make an appraisal of his own work and to generalize his proceedings and findings so that he will be able to carry out his work better the next time. In addition he should acquire the habits of neatness, thoroughness, and clear thinking as well as the ideals of fair play, honesty with himself and others, and a realization of the fact that there are other individuals besides himself. These are only a few which might be mentioned.

When applying such a procedure as the one discussed to a particular semester in the English work, one has to group the work to be taught around a few large topics which are the units and then sub-divide them into smaller topics which usually make up a lesson. Following such a scheme the seventh grade material for the first semester has been divided into the following units: sentence recognition, capitalization and punctuation, a study of the subject and the predicate, and an introduction to the study of parts of speech. These units are then divided into lessons and so make up the work to be covered.

The general organization of the units is as follows:

Grammar — Grade 7B — Unit II  
Capitalization and Punctuation

I. Exploratory Test

II. Work Sheets

Lesson A. The Capital Letter

## INDIVIDUALIZATION OF GRAMMAR

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- Lesson B. The Period**
- Lesson C. The Comma in Apposition**
- Lesson D. Quotation Marks around Titles**
- Lesson E. The Comma in Address**
- Lesson F. The Comma in Dates**
- Lesson G. The Comma in a Series**
- Lesson H. Review of the Unit**
- Keys to the Lesson sheets**

### III. Achievement Test

In this, and the following numbers unit II of 7B grammar is given. The subject of this unit is capitalization and punctuation. In this number appears a sample of the individual pupil's record sheet, and the exploratory test. Later numbers will contain the study unit proper, and the achievement test.

#### RECORD SHEET FOR UNIT

Name \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

Date begun \_\_\_\_\_ Date completed \_\_\_\_\_

##### Record of Success on Tests

Date	Part	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total
	Achievement									
	Exploratory									
	Growth									

##### Record of Progress on Lessons

Lesson	Date	Notes	No. Right
H			
G			
F			
E			
D			
C			
B			
A			

#### *GRAMMAR — GRADE 7B — UNIT II*

#### *Capitalization and Punctuation*

#### *EXPLORATORY TEST*

In the following exercises you will find some things about capitalization and punctuation which you have studied before and some things that may be new to you. This will be a fine opportunity for you to check yourself.

A. Copy these sentences putting capitals in the proper places:

1. john came home friday.
2. the boy ran to the fire.
3. he called, "may i go?"

4. "poems are made by fools like me,  
but only god can make a tree."
5. mr. brown, who owns that garage, is here.
6. i like to read "tom sawyer".
7. dear sue,  
please send me your new address.  
sincerely yours,  
helen
8. in the month of june the thirteenth came on  
friday.

## THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

9. we like to read "the american magazine".
10. did you ever see the grand canyon?

## B. Copy and insert periods in the proper places:

1. Dr C G Guiles lives on Green St
2. Prof Jas B Cole taught in Dansville, Ill
3. We visited Washington, D C last year
4. Mrs B W Harrison lives at 143 Connecticut Ave
5. Miss Etta Cramm came to Pontiac, Mich from Denver, Colo

## C. Copy and insert the necessary punctuation marks:

1. Mary Smith the girl across the street was here.
2. Billy the little curly-headed boy goes to school.
3. Mr. Higgins the football coach will be at Northern this year.
4. The whole family called on Edgar Billings a teacher of chemistry.
5. The Lincoln plant owned by Ford is at Warren and Livernois.

## D. Copy and insert the necessary punctuation marks:

1. Jack had just finished reading Buffalo Bill in the West.
2. Jack and the Pony Express is a good book.
3. How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix was written by Browning.
4. My Pet Pony is a story for smaller children.
5. Did you like Head On?

## E. Copy and insert the necessary punctuation marks:

1. John come here.

2. Yes you may go.
3. I am sure that you boys will enjoy that game.
4. No the show is to be held next week.
5. Bring me the paper Jane.
6. I am sure boys that you will enjoy that game.
7. Is it an established fact Mary or are you uncertain?
8. Helen have you read that book?

## F. Copy and insert the necessary punctuation marks:

1. She was born on Friday January 3 1916.
2. Have you ever lived in Chicago Illinois?
3. The case will go to court on Tuesday March 3 1930.
4. I have a friend who lives in Tampa Florida.
5. We arrived in Sacramento Cal. on Wednesday July 10 1928.

## G. See if you can improve these sentences:

1. John and James and Jack were visiting their sister.
2. They liked to pick the apples and the pears and the peaches and the plums.
3. Their cousins and their aunts and their uncles came to see them.
4. The robins and the swallows and the wrens have all built their nests.

When you have done your best on this test, give your paper to your teacher to be checked. You will have an opportunity to work on the topics which your test shows you do not understand perfectly.

(To be continued)

"For, doubtless, right language enlarges the soul as no other power or influence may do. Who, for instance, but trusts more nobly for knowing the full word of his confidence? . . . Consciousness and the word are almost as closely united as thought and the word."

—Alice Meynell

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popularity, to impress one's self upon others (2:259)

5. "The establishment of a language conscience and consciousness through pupil appraisal of their own themes is even more significant than extended drill in a few of the mechanical details of expression" (6:228)
6. Drill periods should be entirely separate from those devoted to expression (6:44)
7. The teacher should follow a definite program of methods for improving language (2:266-77)
  - a. Constructive analytical group judgment of the language that the group is using
  - b. Natural social reaction of group to compositions
  - c. Self-appraisal
  - d. Observations of language outside school
  - e. Study of superior specimens
  - f. Committee work on language situations
  - g. Reference to textbooks for justification of opinions
  - h. Sectioning pupils into "English attainment" groups

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### VITALIZING BEGINNING ENGLISH

(Continued from page 82)

3. Group composition should precede independent writing.
4. In group composition the teacher will consciously teach the children many things in respect to form, but it will be done in an incidental way.
5. Letter writing is a desirable type of experience with which to begin independent writing.
6. Definite preparation should be made for all written English in order that

difficulties be removed and errors avoided. Standards should be set and, as far as possible, adhered to in all written work.

7. The highest type of English is original creative work — the thing the child writes because he feels the urge to express himself. True creative work is a symptom of desirable classroom conditions. As such, it may very properly be sought after, but not as an end in itself.

(Continued from page 87)

### My Surprise

One night when I arrived home from school, my mother told me to hurry and get ready for we were going to Winsted. After I had changed my dress, she sent me over to Alice Marcon's on an errand. On my return, I was more than astonished to find several children in our house. They all shouted, "Happy Birthday!" What a surprise!

### Fourth Grade

#### My Fall

I was just going down to breakfast. All of a sudden, I felt as if I were falling. Down, down, I went. Presently I hit something hard. I woke up and found that I had been walking in my sleep, and had fallen down the stairs.

#### My Dream

Last night I dreamed I went to Africa with Lindy in his airplane. It took us a long time to reach there. Lindy asked me if I wanted to go to the jungle. My reply was, "Yes." In this jungle I saw many huge animals. Then I awoke, and was disappointed to find it was only a dream.

#### A Bicycle Ride

Not long ago Elton Robinson brought his bicycle to school. He told me that I might have a ride. I managed to get on, but could not balance myself. I finally learned the trick.

#### Food for Rabbits

The rabbit eats carrots, lettuce, cabbage, grass and clover. They get the grass and clover from the fields. The other food, they steal from gardens. That is why the rabbit is our enemy.

### Upper Grades (One-room rural schools)

#### Maine Memorial Day

February fifteenth is celebrated as Maine Memorial Day in honor of the men who

were killed when the Maine was sunk in the Havana Harbor, Cuba, in 1898.

The Maine was a battleship sent by the United States on a peaceful mission. While in the Havana Harbor, the Spanish destroyed it, and all the men on board were killed. The sinking of the Maine was the cause for starting the Spanish-American War.

#### History of the Amesville School

The Amesville school was originally located about 1000 feet north of its present location on the other side of the road. A Mr. Landon donated \$100 toward the construction of the school in 1854. Amesville received its name from Mr. Ames, superintendent of the iron shops then in our community. Because that part of Amesville was most thickly populated, the school was given its original location.

The original color of the exterior was white. Four or five steps led to a long porch which extended across the front. The schoolhouse was the old New England type. There was only one part to it then. The bell in the cupola was taken from an old engine.

The interior had one large hall with two small cloakrooms, one for the boys and one for the girls. In the front of the room was a large box stove about four feet long, which had a long stovepipe extending across the room. On the north side were benches for the girls, and on the south side were benches for the boys. The first seats were built against the wall.

All the pupils had to furnish their own materials. Their special studies were Geography, Reading, Writing, Spelling and Arithmetic. Very little Language or History were taught. All the pupils read together when reading period came. The girls pieced quilts on Wednesdays and Fridays.

In 1874, the teacher would board at each pupil's home for three days at a time. Among the pupils attending school at that

time were Miss Mae Burkett, Mr. Frank Howd, and Mr. Lewis Burkett, all who now live in Amesville.

*Letters*

Canaan, Connecticut,  
June 1, 1928

Dear Harriet,

John told us this morning that you are in bed with a bad cold. I hope the doctor is not making you take medicine. I hate to take medicine.

We began a new story in class yesterday. The name is, "The Bluebird." Perhaps your mother will get it and read it to you. I know you will like it.

Your friend,  
Helen Tracy.

Canaan, Connecticut,  
June 1, 1928

Dear Barbara,

Father brought home a big box and said

it was for my birthday. Today when I opened it, what do you think I found! I will not tell you for I want you to come over and see for yourself. Saturday will be a good time. Please come.

Your friend,  
Frances Hugins.

To the supervisor, the most gratifying result was the manifest interest in language activities during the two years following this work in the improvement of English. During this time, many units of work with their accompanying activities were developed, and in nearly all cases, the language phase was quite naturally and sufficiently emphasized. Much remained to be done in many of the schools where the effects of foreign language difficulties were in evidence, but even in these schools the good effects of the drive were apparent.

THE VOICE OF BOREAS

O NCE more I sweep the shrieking woods  
to carry out my will,  
What was before a tall majestic oak is now  
just—wood!  
When I upthrew those mighty roots, a yawn-  
ing hole was left.  
Strong am I! A pit I left where once that  
tall tree stood.

I challenge rain and tree and beast, "Exceed  
my mighty strength!"  
Ah me! No answer from the forest falls  
upon my ear,  
Thus proving I am monarch over all the  
shivering woods,  
They all are cowards! Knowing of my rag-  
ing strength, they fear.

—Anna Ann Lord  
Age 12, Grade 7  
South Intermediate School,  
Saginaw, Michigan

# Editorial

## A PEDAGOGICAL OLD MAN OF THE SEA

**G**RAMMAR and the mechanics of writing both imply a rather narrow pedagogical routine to many teachers. When they consider teaching either, some teachers seem to regard the subject as formal or fixed, something so rigorously involved in logic on the one hand and convention on the other as to require of the pupils considerable drill in doing a prescribed thing, but little or no thinking concomitant to the doing. And to this point of view, so deeply sunk beneath the mental consciousness of the teachers as to make them almost blind to the true situation, may be attributed the widespread neglect of standardized grammar tests and tests in punctuation and writing as means of diagnosis and prognosis in teaching.

In consequence, there is a flouting of the very idea of individual difficulties of this or that pupil in the daily lesson assignment. The pupil is assigned the lesson as a task, be it grammar exercise or punctuation, to be done as a task with as few questions asked as possible, and with as little thinking. He must do "what it says in the book," or he must do what he is told to do by the teacher, with small concern for fruitful understanding or genuine achievement of any kind. The intent of the lesson is not to get at this or that weakness of the pupil, for of the real nature of any possible weakness both pupil and teacher are ignorant, but a far more superficial thing. The intent is simply that of blind doing.

Too often there is a shift of relation in this mere doing from the subject itself to the general problem of discipline, or rather classroom deportment. There is the principle of factory production back of this style of lesson in grammar or in the mechanics of writing that absorbs energy. Even the bad youngster succumbs to the routine. The reader may picture for himself the common scene in the class where, for example, sentence diagramming has been in progress three or four weeks. The children are shown how to diagram or present graphically some construction in grammar. Then follows sentence after sentence and diagram after diagram. And the children hand in sheets upon sheets of paper to be checked, or fill the blackboards, fill, erase, and fill them again. Now this sounds like something that was done twelve or fifteen years ago when English teaching was in the dark ages of method. But one doesn't have to search beyond the first five great cities of the country to find it a commonplace of the English class room of today.

Grammar and the mechanics of writing are still the incubus of intelligent English teaching. The means for removing the incubus still lies in the proper use of standard tests and remedial drills. But the Old Man of the Sea rides on and on—through the grades and into the high schools where his grip grows tighter.

# Shop Talk

## NATION-WIDE EXPERIMENTAL SURVEY

**A**NNOUNCEMENT has been made by Dr. L. J. O'Rourke, that the English Survey Test, which forms the first part of the Nation-Wide Experimental Study of English Usage, will be continued. The test is sponsored by the Psychological Corporation, and directed by Dr. O'Rourke. The extension of time for this Survey Test has been arranged at the urgent request of many teachers and supervisors who received notice of the testing program too late to include it in their programs last fall.

At present, the Survey Test is offered for use in grades seven to twelve, inclusive, and in the first year of college. The program will be extended, this spring, to include material for grades three to six.

This test, which was prepared by Dr. O'Rourke, consists of a total of fifty items, covering various phases of English usage which should be mastered in the lower grades. It is based upon an analysis of thousands of test records, and is designed to yield immediate practical benefit to teachers and pupils, as well as to supply essential data for the improvement of instruction in English usage. It is so constructed as to enable teachers to discover the exact needs of their classes, and to meet these needs. A "remedial sheet" for the teacher's use accompanies all tests. This "remedial sheet" contains the answer, a brief statement of the specific phase of usage covered by each item, and a column in which to record the number of correct answers to each item.

The Experimental Study in English Usage consists at present of two series, of which the Survey Test is the first, and a test designed to measure the effects of instruction in specific points of usage, the

second. The second series will be available on or after April 15.

Dr. O'Rourke is now conducting further research in order to make available for the school year of 1931-1932, studies in composition, vocabulary, and reading. Dr. C. H. Judd, and others, will cooperate in these research programs and will provide for the use of experimental schools. The studies will include all of the elementary grades, junior and senior high schools, and the first year of college.

An especially commendable feature of the Nation-Wide Experimental Survey of English Usage is that participation requires no more work on the part of the teacher than any less comprehensive testing program, except that teachers are requested to copy the results of the tests and send them to the Corporation, where the material will be tabulated and analyzed to form a nation-wide report to be published by the United States Bureau of Education. Records of individual schools and pupils will be entirely confidential.

If, however, school officials wish the program solely as a teaching device, and are not interested in plotting the record forms, these forms need not be filled out, and papers may be corrected by the pupils in class periods. The tests have proved very valuable for classroom use, even in cases where no reports or records were submitted.

The cost of materials required for participation in this study has been reduced to a minimum. Any schools that have not already enrolled for the study are invited to participate in the April program.

## Reviews and Abstracts

**MADE IN MEXICO.** By Susan Smith. Decorated with photographs, and drawings by Julio Castellanos. Alfred A. Knopf, 1930. \$2.00

A lively style, pervasive humor, and happy selection of legends and anecdotes combine to make this book on Mexican handcraft almost as absorbing as an adventure story.

"In Mexico," Miss Smith says, "art is not kept in museums only. You find it in the market-places, on the street corner, on station platforms, by the roadside, in the *patios*, and in the kitchen." It is of this common art that Miss Smith writes, for "Everything that is '*corriente*'—that is, in common use among the people—is beautiful and personal and made with intention." The pottery kitchen utensils, decorated with such sentiments as "My love is for you, Conchita," the hand-woven *serapes*, the lacquered boxes and bowls, which Miss Smith says are as fine as oriental ware, embroideries, glass, and above all, toys, are described, and pictured in the drawings by Julio Castellanos, a young Mexican artist, and in photographs.

This book should be invaluable in an elementary school library, or in the children's room of a public library, for it is lively in style, very readable, and evidently authentic, for the author is an authority on decoration, and gathered the material for this book first-hand during a winter in Mexico. Teachers of art and geography will find it useful for reference, and its typographical and literary charm make it of interest to English teachers.

—D. B.

**ANTON AND TRINI, Children of the Alpland.** By Virginia Olcott. With illustrations by Constance Whittemore. Silver, Burdett, 1930. 76c.

Miss Olcott, who knows children, knows books, and evidently knows Switzerland, has produced, in **ANTON AND TRINI**, an unusually readable and interesting volume.

Anton, who lives in a beautiful brown chalet, among high, green meadows, is host, for a summer, to Trini, a little girl from Bern, whose mother is paying a visit to Anton's *Mutterli*. The cattle-herding, cheese-making, wood-carving, and watch making of the thrifty Swiss folk are described, pleasantly, and a number of Swiss stories and legends, and translations of folk songs are given. "Up-the-Alp Day" and the "Hay-Sunday Festival" are described.

In addition to its literary qualities, the book has other excellencies. It stands out from the multitude of supplementary readers for its attractive blue and lemon binding, and lemon end papers, and for its good typographical design. The type-page is well planned, and the type face similar to that used in fine trade books. Indeed, it can scarcely be compared with the usual run of supplementary readers.

The illustrations, by Constance Whittemore, are unusually fresh and vigorous.

—D. B.